



**The Professional Trades Union for Prison,
Correctional & Secure Psychiatric Workers**

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Dear POA members and Branch Officials

NATIONAL CHAIR ADDRESS

I wanted to pass onto you all my sincerest thanks for the brave and essential work you are all carrying out during these unprecedented times. You are rightly being recognised as an Emergency Frontline Service and I know through discussions with the Secretary of State for Justice, Robert Buckland MP QC, that you are highly regarded by all in Government, including the Prime Minister who wishes me to relay his thanks to you for the difficult and dangerous work you are professionally carrying out on the frontline.

I would also like to take the time to thank all local POA representatives in every workplace throughout the UK who are the backbone of this Union and are dealing with a plethora of issues and concerns. Without the local officials we would be unable to secure your safety or offer support.

You are a credit to this Union, keep up the good work and remember the NEC are here for you.

I am well aware of all your issues and I can assure you that your NEC are working tirelessly to support you, protect you and ensure the PPE that you need continues to arrive at your workplaces. Better quality PPE has also been resourced and should be in the country soon for your use.

The Government have confirmed to me that Prison Officers are now a priority, along with the NHS, for COVID-19 testing. We have also been prioritised for upgraded PPE.

Your Governors and local committees are now in receipt of updated Operational Guidance in relation to COVID-19 and these must be adhered to strictly. Government advice must also be followed in the Private Sector Estate and Secure Hospitals. There are no exceptions. Social distancing is vital to prevent the spread, so significant numbers of prisoners / patients unlocked at any one time is not acceptable.

You should also note that the POA did not negotiate the bonus scheme you have been offered. We were consulted about payments, relayed our disappointment at the rates of pay and offered suggestions to improve it, but the scheme was the best that could be achieved at the time with Treasury. Whilst I accept all the frustrations about the disparity in payments between Governors and other grades, you must also accept that I am not in a position to reject an offer to increase your pay during these difficult times. We continue to seek bonus schemes for our Private Sector workplaces and Secure Hospitals.

We are no longer the forgotten Service. I will continue to work in partnership with the Government and employer to ensure you are recognised for everything you are doing.

The value of Trade Unions during such times is evident and I wish to thank you all for your continued support.

As a Union we will update you as often as we can. Updates will also be on social media so please access twitter at National Chair POA@POAnatchair.

Look after each other, your families and loved ones. Once again, my heartfelt thanks to each and every one of you.

Our solidarity and unity will get us through.

Stay safe.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Fairhurst', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

MARK FAIRHURST
National Chair